



BALANCE



Step 11

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out."

I never cease to be amazed at the functional aspect of each step. Sought through prayer and meditation—that means I need to pray and meditate. If I allow the first 10 steps to work through me, but fail to pray and meditate, I will surely regress in my recovery.

This past week-end I attended a retreat. I came away refreshed and positive. As my friend and I were driving home we discussed the positive, refreshed feeling we both experienced. We decided the feeling came from being with people who were active in step work and people who truly were embracing the steps. One person shared that he didn't work the steps, but he allowed the steps to work through him. As I thought upon that sharing, I realized the steps have worked to carry me through my journey. I have not worked the steps. I allow the steps to work through me.

Step Eleven works through me every time I take 30 minutes, 15 minutes, 5 minutes or just a moment to seek the knowledge of His will to carry me through. Sometimes I ask for a day. More often I ask to be carried through the next 5 minutes. Sometimes I'm down to asking, praying & meditating one minute at a time.

If I continue to keep all the steps in my life, step 11 will especially carry me through some moments that would be far more painful without my program.

~Ila

Step 12

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives."

I apologize for redundancy. This step gives me the same message as Step 11. If the first eleven steps are working through me and I fail to complete my recovery with 12th step work, I will soon have nothing.

This program is no different than any other work or life situation. If I am not moving forward, I will regress backward. There is no way I can practice program to a certain level and then hope to "just stay there". My program needs maintenance just as other aspects of my life. My haircuts don't last. My manicures need constant care. I practice cleanliness every day.

My program is the same. My program needs personal maintenance each day. Personal maintenance for me means actively experiencing step 12 daily. For me, step 12 includes receiving calls from others, attending meetings, sharing social times with other recovering people, sharing my recovery and practicing forgiveness with my family and friends, submitting articles to the newsletter, supporting my NSO and many more ways that I'm sure I've forgotten.

I am certain I cannot keep my recovery if I don't give it away. I don't know how it works. I just know it works.

I am also certain that if I am not actively moving forward in my program I will not simply plateau. I will regress.

I am grateful for my program. I enjoy my program. I enjoy and am grateful to have the gifts available to me to give this program away. ~Ila

Step 1

"We admitted we were powerless over our sexual codependency—that our lives had become unmanageable."

Today, it is easy for me to admit I am powerless. It is with clarity that I see my unmanageability.

When I came into the program, I was grateful to hear the word powerless. That word gave me relief. I was relieved to know that maybe everything wasn't my fault. If I was powerless, maybe I didn't need to take responsibility for everything. Today, I know that I'm powerless. I know that I am not responsible for all sadness or happiness that occurs around me.

I have even more clarity about unmanageability. Nothing is within my ability to control. Everything about my life is God's plan, not mine. When things go wrong, I simply ask God, "Why did you do that? What will be my revelation from this change in my "managed" schedule? Sometimes I receive the answer quickly while other times I wait for long periods of time as my process unfolds.

Every step feels like a cloak wrapped around me to protect me and guide me as I learn and grow in my journey of self revelation.

Of course, I always receive comfort from the word "we". The very first word in that step. We- there is more than just me. I am not alone in my journey. I am not alone in my grief. I am not alone in my joy. We means there are others to support us. I have experienced the others. Without the "we" others in this program, I would not be where I am today. I truly believe my recovery cannot happen by myself. ~Ila

A Time Comes In Your Life ...

A time comes in your life when you finally get it... When in the midst of all your fears and insanity you stop dead in your tracks, and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out - ENOUGH!

Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on. And, like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears, and through a mantle of wet lashes you begin to look at the world through new eyes. This is your awakening.

You realize that it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change or for happiness, safety and security to come galloping over the next horizon. You come to terms with the fact that he is not Prince Charming and you are not Cinderella and that in the real world there aren't always fairy tale endings (or beginnings for that matter), and that any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with you; and in the process a sense of serenity is born of acceptance. You awaken to the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will always love, appreciate or approve of who or what you are ... and that's OK. (They are entitled to their own views and opinions.) And you learn the importance of loving and championing yourself; and in the process a sense of newfound confidence is born of self-approval.

You stop complaining and blaming other people for the things they did to you (or didn't do for you) and you learn that the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected. You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say, and that not everyone will always be there for you; and that it's not always about you. So, you learn to stand on your own, and to take care of yourself; and in the process a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers ... and you begin to accept people as they are, and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties; and in the process a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness. You realize that much of the way you view yourself and the world around you is a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche. And you begin to sift through all that you've been fed about how you should behave, how you should look, and how much you should weigh; what you should wear and where you should shop, and what you should drive; how and where you should live, and what you should do for a living; who you should sleep with, who you should marry, and what you should expect of a marriage; the importance of having and raising children, or what you owe your parents.

You learn to open up to new worlds and

different points of view. And you begin re-assessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for. You learn the difference between wanting and needing and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with; and in the process you learn to go with your instincts.

You learn that it is truly in giving that we receive. And that there is power and glory in creating and contributing; and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix. You learn that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era, but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life. You learn that you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world ... and that you can't teach a pig to sing.

You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility, and the importance of setting boundaries, and learning to say NO. You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry, and that martyrs get burned at the stake. Then you learn about love. Romantic love and familial love. How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving, and when to walk away.

You learn not to project your needs or your feelings onto a relationship.

You learn that you will not be more beautiful, more intelligent, more lovable or important because of the man on your arm or the child that bears your name.

You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be. You stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes.

You learn that just as people grow and change, so it is with love...and you learn that you don't have the right to demand love on your terms ... just to make you happy. And, you learn that alone does not mean lonely. And you look in the mirror and come to terms with the fact that you will never be a size 5 or a perfect 10, and you stop trying to compete with the image inside your head and agonizing over how you "stack up." You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring your needs. You learn that feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK.... And that it is your right to want things and to ask for the things that you want...and that sometimes it is necessary to make demands.

You come to the realization that you deserve to be treated with love, kindness, sensitivity and respect; and you won't settle for less. And, you allow only the hands of a lover who cherishes you to glorify you with his/her touch ... and in the process you internalize the meaning of self-respect. And you learn that your body really is your

temple, and you begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin eating a balanced diet, drinking more water and taking more time to exercise. You learn that fatigue diminishes the spirit and can create doubt and fear. So you take more time to rest. And, just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul. So you take more time to laugh and to play. You learn, that for the most part, in life you get what you believe you deserve ... and that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for, and that wishing for something to happen is different from working toward making it happen. More importantly, you learn that in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline and perseverance. You also learn that no one can do it all alone and that it's OK to risk asking for help. You learn that the only thing you must truly fear is the great robber baron of all time. FEAR itself. You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know that whatever happens you can handle it, and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live life on your terms. And you learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom.

You learn that life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve; and that sometimes bad things happen to unsuspecting, good people. On these occasions you learn not to personalize things. You learn that God isn't punishing you or failing to answer your prayers. It's just life happening. And you learn to deal with evil in its most primal state - the ego. You learn that negative feelings such as anger, envy and resentment must be understood and redirected or they will suffocate the life out of you, and poison the universe that surrounds you.

You learn to admit when you are wrong and to building bridges instead of walls. You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted, things that millions of people upon the earth can only dream about: a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, a long hot shower. Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself; and to make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never, ever settle for less than your heart's desire. And you hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind. And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting, and to stay open to every wonderful possibility.

Finally, with courage in your heart and with God by your side you take a stand; you take a deep breath, and you begin to design the life you want to live as best as you can.

-Author Unknown

WELCOME to these new groups!

"Dadeville, Alabama"

"Eastside St Paul Women's COSA, St. Paul, MN"

River Ridge[outside of New Orleans], LA

"Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada"

"Santa Barbara, CA. 12 Step Serenity"

"Madison, WI."

"Kirkland, WA."

"Tacoma, WA."

"Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada"

"Los Vegas, NV."

"Lockport, NY"

"Albany, NY"

"Chehalls, WA"

Congratulations!!!!!! We admire your effort. We all know it is difficult and scary to start a meeting. As your NSO, we are here to support you. Please contact us with your needs and suggestions. Again, remember, you are not alone. You have a National Organization keeping you in their thoughts and prayers.

(A COSA member asked that this be passed along anonymously because "this prayer truly belongs to everybody who wants it.")

THE WESTPORT PRAYER

I thank the Higher Power
That guided me to this room.
I hold a hand in each of mine.
Each hand bearing fingerprints
unlike any others in the world.

love myself,
Guided by the steadfast support
of all the special souls in this
circle.

Guide me to a truer under-
standing
Of what it means to know and

For in this room,
holding these loving hands,
I am learning not to fear
Whatever the future may hold.

RETREATS

Michigan Retreat

More on Healthy Sexuality

March 30, 31 & April 1st 2001

For more information, write P O BOX 502, Mt Morris, MI. If you missed the Fall retreat on Healthy Sexuality, you are still welcome and qualify for the Spring retreat.

All those who attended felt they had only just begun to glimpse the areas that need to be processed. Right where you are at is right where you are suppose to be if you decide to attend. Registration deadline, December 21, 2000.

Things I have learned ...

"I can't build myself up
by tearing someone else down"

"Living without faith is like driving in the fog."

"The difficulties of life are intended to
make us better—not bitter."

"It isn't necessary to blow out the other fellow's
light in order to let my own light shine."

Fantasy

I have fantasized as long as I can remember. When I was a little girl I remember laying awake in bed and making up 'stories' in my head to help me fall asleep. In my younger years these were primarily fantasies about having a horse that came when I called it's name and that I was the envy of everyone. Some were about my 'saving the day' for everyone from bad guys, burning buildings, earthquakes and various other tragedies. As I got older, I would dream up a good story about how I met a rock star who wanted only me and we were married and crazy in love.

It's been a way to fall asleep. Pass time waiting, and fill up long days. On long car trips, I would find myself settling in and thinking, "OK where shall I go tonight?"

As I became an adult, a mom and a wife, my fantasies would expand to death defying feats of bravery, to extreme loss and even to notoriety.

As my life with a Sex Addict became unmanageable, I would dream about him dying and then myself receiving lots of sympathy. My sister told me about a book entitled "Widows Are So Lucky".

I think I probably started fantasizing when I was very young and wanted to avoid the pain of the abuse I was personally receiving or the craziness I was witnessing in my family.

When things became very difficult in my life and marriage, I found my stories, fantasies center around an old boyfriend or a new guy at the office. Because I made a commitment to rigorous honesty, I told a recovery friend of mine who said "You seem to be trying to avoid dealing with reality" I said "who would want THIS reality? My fantasy life is so much more enjoyable!"

I thought my fantasies were safe respite for me. I thought they were harmless.

After recovery, I learned to meditate and began meditating or praying before falling asleep at night. On long drives, I began to work the steps in my head or ask for guidance or listen to recovery tapes. My fantasy life was greatly compromised! I wanted time for my 'stories'!

I felt that the 'avoiding reality' argument was so shaming. I was learning how to deal with reality. Reality was at times to painful!

I heard a woman talk about how fantasy is a way of avoiding grief. It clicked for me. All of these years I was using my stories to avoid grieving losses. I hadn't the skills nor the support to allow myself to grieve the many losses. It made sense. I started looking at all of the fantasies—even the 3 second ones and found that behind my 'stories' lay grief!

The fantasies about winning Publishers Clearinghouse was actually my need to grieve the financial mess we were in!

My fantasies about my old boyfriend were actually a way to avoid grieving my failing marriage.

My fantasy about saving everyone at work from a disaster, was actually my own grief over stepping down from a high profile job.

It all makes sense now. I needed grieving time. I now have the support. I am beginning to develop the skills and have the compassion for myself to grieve!

Because I'm human, I can: Smell a flower ... Hug someone ... Roll down a hill ... Go to sleep when I'm tired ... Hold hands ... Look out a window ... Believe in unicorns ... Climb a Tree ... Lie face down in the grass ... Chew five sticks of bubble gum all at once

Excerpts from COSABIZ

COSABIZ is your COSA discussion list. Those with computers and email are welcome to participate. Contact the web site on the back of this newsletter for information to participate.

Question & Answers

Q. Any ideas on how to jump start a COSA group that is effectively folding? Lots of folks say they want the group but, they don't show for the meetings.

***** I'd like to offer my ESH on getting/keeping groups going. First of all, it's too bad that the prospect of recovery isn't enough to keep members coming back. I have found that I must do my part and let go of the outcome. If I stress over people leaving our groups folding then I am giving away my serenity. This does not mean that I do nothing, however. In my experience there are several things that get people into meetings besides recovery. One is food. I know it's petty, but it works. Even just coffee and cookies can motivate people. I think snacks make the meeting more homey and comfortable. I know when we have a COSA birthday we bring lots of snacks and those are always big meetings. Obviously celebrating program birthdays are encouraging members to take pride in their work and progress helps a meeting.

Another thing that I have seen make a huge difference in group morale and attendance is socializing. We go out together after meetings. This encourages deeper relationships and that gets people personally invested in their meeting. We focus a lot on "outer circle" stuff spiritually connected and emotionally, mentally and physically healthy. We do these things together outside of meetings. Service work also gives members a "place" and a connection to the group. If you don't have a Group rep, secretary or literature person, I suggest electing some. Members can also be put in charge of outreach. Regular business meetings give everyone a chance to contribute to the guts of the meeting and foster responsibility. Most important, I think, is that someone in the group is talking about the solution. When people share about the steps, sponsorship, boundaries, healing, etc., it gives the distinct impression that this stuff actually works.

***** I agree with your ideas. I, too, have to be careful so that I don't become codependent to the group. We do however encourage service work. It is a must if one is to really grow in this program. I can't explain why it works. I just know it does. We have never had food or beverages at a meeting. Personally our attendance would have to be much lower than it is now for me to suggest it. If others

wanted it, I wouldn't be against it. We do go to a nearby restaurant after the meeting. Usually the meeting continues there. It is a very good time to really get to know each other better. Recently my husband had a biological birthday. One member of his group made a few phone calls the day of the meeting. Their meeting tripled that night. After a meeting like that, attendance goes down considerably for the next meeting but not as low as it was before the event. We find the retreats are very beneficial as a away for us to get the indepth boost that rekindles our meeting attendance. If your group has never held a retreat, start with an eight-hour [one-day] retreat. We did that several years ago and the group all knew they had to have more and longer. Our retreats have been alive and well attended ever since. We ALWAYS hold a meeting with a format. I still believe the biggest meeting killer is coming in, not using an opener, not reading the step. We have a few people in our groups that don't like all of the ritual. They want to just walk in and start talking. It won't work. First of all, the ritual gets us out of the world that we just left, and focused on our needs, feelings etc. It seems when there isn't a meeting format, the people just talk, then it turns to advice and often times gossip. Not using a format and the steps is guaranteed to kill a meeting [in my humble opinion].

***** One thing we do a lot of is our phone list. It seems to be one of the main things that all of the newcomers garb — often at our urging. Another thing we do is break our meeting 15 minutes before we have to vacate our meeting place. If there is a newcomer, one or more of us go up to them and welcome them to our meeting. We then have at least the 15 minutes to talk with them about whatever they want to talk about. Lately, we have also been meeting for coffee or a bite to eat at a local restaurant. Sometimes one of us has dinner with a newcomer.

We have also done flyers and put them up in recovery related places. Several therapists also know about us and have been referring people to our meeting. The local SAAs have information about our meeting and have referred people to us. So far, the best source for members is from our SAAs.

***** As I see it, the only thing that kept me coming back to meetings was my service work. Service work, also known as 12 step work, also known as giving the program away, is the key to my sticking to my program during the difficult time.

NSO/COSA donations

With competent work from our mail person in Minnesota and a little effort from your editor, we are hoping to thank you by sharing the donation you made to your NSO.

This time, we were quite vague. Some of you may not want your city listed if you sent a personal donation. Others may want not only their city listed, but also their group name if the donation came from your group. In the future [if you specify on your donation slip or literature order form] we will honor you as best we know how through this newsletter.

Your donations are important to the survival of your COSA twelve step organization. We know we have been disorganized in the past. We believe we have systems in place that will increase our competency. We also realize, for us to be competent, we need the input from each of you.

We need your input through donations, articles that can be shared through our

newsletter, your attendance at our regional & national conferences, as board members, people who return phone calls to those still searching, long distance sponsors and many more ways I've overlooked, I'm sure.

I, personally, pray that COSA will be alive and well when my children are in pain and needing this group. I'm sure each of you desires the same for your children. May they never search as most of us did to find a safe place to share & heal.

January -September 2000

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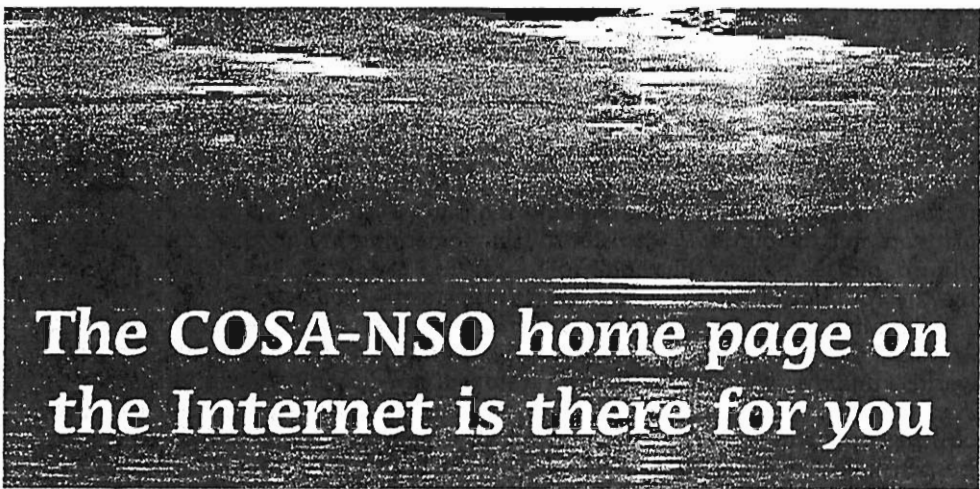
THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!

Please consider your NSO/COSA as you begin making your end of the year and holiday gift donations

Thanks again,
Your editor, Lia

Thought for the day:

"The measure of an adult is how they treat a child"



**The COSA-NSO home page on
the Internet is there for you**

Check it out at www.shore.net/~cosa
Here is the current Table Of Contents:

What is COSA?

Contact Information

How do I know if COSA is for me?

More about COSA

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The Twelve Traditions of COSA

The Gifts

COSA Recovery Tools (a new piece of literature!)

COSA Literature List

Conferences, Retreats, Workshops, etc.

COSA Registration Form

(so we can send newcomers your way)

E-mail Support Group

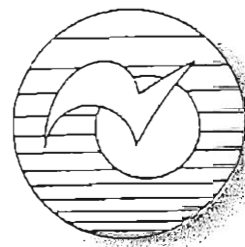
Links for Sex Addiction and Codependency.

Let us know what you think, it's your website!

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